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# Blended learning internationalization from the Commonwealth: An Australian and Canadian collaborative case study


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# Cases on Globalized and Culturally Appropriate E-Learning: Challenges and Solutions

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# Chapter 7

## Blended Learning Internationalization from the Commonwealth: An Australian and Canadian Collaborative Case Study

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*This case depiction addresses the contentious issue of providing culturally and globally accessible teaching and learning to international students in universities in the Commonwealth nations of Australia and Canada. The chapter describes the university systems and cultures, the barriers to authentic higher education internationalization, and the problems frequently experienced by international students. Two university cases are presented and analysed to depict and detail blended learning approaches (face-to-face combined with e-learning) as exemplars of culturally and globally accessible higher education and thereby ideologically grounded internationalization. Lessons learned are presented at the systems level and as teaching and learning solutions designed to address pedagogical problems frequently experienced by international students in the areas of communication, academic skills, teaching and learning conceptualization, and moving from rote learning to critical thinking. The blended learning solutions are analysed through the lens of critical theory.*

### SITUATION BACKGROUND

The *cultural and global accessibility* of a university's teaching and learning is a direct measure

of whether the university's development mission is to promote intercultural education and worldwide networks or whether that higher education institution recruits international students primarily as lucrative export-industry goods. *Culture* is

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the overall mindset shaped in a time and place and shared by a group of individuals. When individuals such as international students leave their group they typically carry a mindset with them from their culture of origin to their culture of study. This definition of culture is grounded in Hofstede's (2001) model. He defined culture as "collective programming of the mind" (p. 1). He explained that "it manifests itself not only in values, but in more superficial ways: in symbols, heroes, and rituals" (p. 1). *Cultural accessibility* means that faculty members actively design their teaching to ensure that *all* of their students are learning, through interaction with the instructor, their student peers and with globally responsible and responsive content (McBurnie, 2000). Lanham and Zhou (2003) wrote, "the inclusion of multiple cultures in university courses means that a more flexible approach should be taken with the design of these courses to ensure that all students are able to reach their course goals" (p. 278). Cultural accessibility can only be understood against the backdrop of internationalization which is a conflicted interplay between economy, pedagogy, and ideology (Meiras, 2004).

Surging in the mid 1990s, enrolment of international students in developed Commonwealth nations became a profitable industry (Davies & Harcourt, 2007; De Vita, 2007; Poole, 2001). The economic advantage of international student enrolment drove an operational or business stance on internationalization (De Vita & Case, 2003; Edwards et al., 2003). De Vita and Case contrasted the economic stance of universities "expand[ing] their financial base by using international students as a source of revenue" with the ideological stance in which the primary work of universities is "preparing students to live and work in a multicultural society through greater understanding and respect for other cultures" (p. 385). While cultural accessibility is a laudable goal, there is a great deal of contemporary discourse presenting universities as more interested in capitalism than knowledge

emancipation (Cimbala, 2002; Gunn, 2000; Huff, 2006; Murray & Dollery, 2005; Versluis, 2004).

Numerous critical theorists argue that administrators have paid so much attention to the profitability of internationalization that universities have not supported the needs of the international student nor benefitted from the knowledge and understanding brought by students from diverse cultures. In short, critics argue that issues of economic viability have diverted attention from the student experience. Davies and Harcourt (2007) wrote, "...considerable funds are spent on marketing and raising expectations when in fact the relationship between the academic staff member and the student is a key source of satisfaction" (p. 122). Brown and Jones (2007) wrote, "...to date, recruitment of international students has been seen by many primarily as a source of income generation, a 'cash cow', and often diverse students, once recruited, were problematised by the academy and seen as needy of support in a kind of deficit model" (p. 2). Brown and Joughin (2007) wrote that once in-program, international students are perceived as "bearers of problems" whereas universities would benefit from perceiving them as "bearers of culture" (p. 58). Post-secondary providers are metaphorically accused of rolling out the red carpet for international student entry, leading to the teaching and learning equivalent of a dungeon rather than palace once the students are inside. This might be as subtle as expectations of references and examples that are institutionally recognized rather than student experienced or as overt as food and dress standards that smell or look correct to the mainstream population.

From May through September 2009, Australia saw a hotbed of media activity reporting accounts of mistreatment of international students and the government's response. Waters and MacBean (May 29, 2009) for *ABC News*; Millar and Doherty (June 1, 2009) for *The Age*, and; Wong (July 13, 2009) as a guest contributor to the *Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at Australian National University* made seven key points. First,

post-secondary education of international students is a \$15.5 billion industry making it Australia's third largest *export* industry earner after minerals and agricultural products. Second, there have been a large number of recent violent attacks on international students from India, and third, some students from China. Fourth, there were arguments regarding whether these attacks were racially targeted or whether the higher incident of attacks on Indian students was statistically proportionate, exacerbated by lifestyle factors that make attacks on students more likely. Fifth, there was dissatisfaction regarding Australian officials' response and perceived inaction to these assaults. Sixth, students held protest marches in Melbourne and Sydney, some of which resulted in physical confrontation between police and protesters. Seventh, Indian parents, officials, and the general public were distressed, resulting in negative public relations regarding Australian international education. These reports were followed by Wendy Carlisle's current affairs inquiry called *Holy Cash Cows*, aired on television July 27, 2009 by Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Four Corners*. The show exposed: vocational training schools where the student experience did not match what was advertised to students, leaving them without career credentials upon graduation, and; crooked migration agents who were selling falsified certificates of visa requirements. The next surge of media reports addressed the Australian government's response to the allegations and events. In *World News Australia* on July 29, 2009 Julia Gillard, Deputy Prime Minister, was quoted as stating, "The Australian government is absolutely committed to providing quality education for all students, and we have taken steps to improve the experience for overseas students" (Para 9). The Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations published a media release on August 19, 2009 introducing an Amendment Bill to the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* and warning "education providers that they

risk being shut down if they don't comply with rules relating to international students" (Para 1). Glidden, for the *Melton Leader* (September 12, 2009) reported that Gillard visited India to restore international relations and ameliorate fears about the safety of students in Australia. Ja and Symons-Brown (September 14, 2009) wrote an article for the *Brisbane Times* stating that Gillard was holding roundtable discussions with international students. Perhaps Australian post-secondary educators are now outside the eye of the media storm, but the imperative of culturally accessible teaching and learning is heightened.

Neither has Canada been immune to criticism regarding treatment of international students. Reitmanova (2008) addressed Canadian universities' failure to provide equitable no-cost health care insurance to international students. The author referenced other inequities in international student benefits and experiences in such domains as childcare and employment. She wrote that while Canadian universities' rhetoric is of internationalization, "...it seems that the vision for such an environment is a narrow one, focused more on increasing the number of international students and organizing annual international food and craft fairs rather than on safeguarding students' rights" (p. 10). Guo and Jamal (2007) indicated that Canadian universities have not achieved cultural accessibility of teaching and learning in that the unconscious pervasive notion that *white is right* has not been adequately surfaced and addressed in attitude, policy and procedure, meaning that students' differences are treated as problems and deficits. What might be conceived of as an unsettled and transitional stage in internationalization, both necessitates and is indicated by, an emphasis on marketing and international student recruitment (Cudmore, 2005).

Perhaps what is most evident from the above summary of popular media and academic literature is that it is necessary but not sufficient to enrol international students in order to achieve internationalization. Higher education internationaliza-

tion has numerous elements, and in this paper we are operationally defining internationalization as quality education for students who enrol in an Australian or Canadian university who do not have citizenship in the respective country. There are numerous stress factors of intercultural study, one of the most significant of which is conversational language (Briguglio, 2000; Patron, 2009; Patron, 2007; Ter-Minasova, 2005) at least in part because language and culture are so embedded that the incoming international student is continually adapting, accommodating and reconciling culture as much as those students from non-English speaking backgrounds are learning to use the mechanics of English (Liddicoat, 2005). For the purposes of this chapter we adopt Leask's (2007) definition of higher education internationalization as learning "...in which students from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds come together in a predominantly English-speaking environment and are taught in English (e.g. in... Australia,... Canada and the US)" (p. 86). Higher education internationalization is not achieved merely by recruiting international students. The institution must also foster a pedagogical stance of cultural appreciation and therefore facilitate culturally accessible teaching and learning.

Being an international student to a Commonwealth country has inherent challenges. De Vita (2007) presented an overview of the internationalization literature, focussing on the experience of international students, particularly in the context of the United Kingdom. His appraisal revealed pedagogic problems of international students as a predominant theme. These problems are exacerbated by the fact that universities are not using "culturally inclusive teaching and assessment strategies" (p. 159). De Vita listed the primary problems of international university students as:

1. barriers to effective intercultural communication, such as cultural stereotyping, language fatigue (for both second-language speakers and listeners) and misunderstand-

- ings due to the unqualified use of colloquialisms, idiomatic expressions and analogies;
2. a cross-cultural awareness gap in approaches in essay writing, in terms of discourse structures, academic literacies and referencing practices;
3. a cultural clash of learning and teaching styles, exemplified by issues such as the reluctance by some international students to participate in class discussions and in other collaborative and student-centred activities;
4. transitional difficulties in moving from dependence on rote learning to developing intellectual independence, critical thinking, the synoptic capacity and autonomous learning skills. (p. 158)

The literature documents intercultural problems of international students beyond the teaching and learning components, such as a discomfort with the Western *drink culture* (consumption of alcohol as a form of entertainment) and the resulting social isolation that can occur (Midgeley, 2009; Patron, 2009). Or, in the case of Canada, an expectation that international students can cope with the climate (extreme winter conditions) and afford the costs associated with dressing appropriately and safely for the varied seasons. While it is important to acknowledge the wide and significant scope of international student concerns, the non-academic problems are beyond the scope of this chapter. The focus of the remainder of this chapter is on the four pedagogic areas identified by De Vita (2007) as identified in the literature as the key problem focuses: communications, with a particular focus on language difficulties; academic skills; teaching and learning stance, and; constructivism.

This chapter describes the solution that two Commonwealth universities have found to facilitate culturally accessible teaching and learning of international students through blended learning. While there are numerous analyses contributing to the specificities of the definition of blended



learning in higher education, most authors agree on the basic elements that: a combination of face-to-face and digital teaching and learning approaches are offered to the students; the tools and approaches are deliberately chosen for their capacities and affordances, and; the design requires original creation versus tacking digital elements onto an existing face-to-face scenario or vice versa (Aspden & Helm, 2004; Boyle, 2005; Denis, 2003; Ellis & Calvo, 2004; Kirkley & Kirkley, 2004; Macdonald & Mcateer, 2003; Moore, 2005; O'Toole & Absalom, 2003; Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003; Stacey & Gerbic, 2007). Jelfs, Nathan and Barrett (2004) added an intriguing element to the definition in that blending also connotes *blending into students' lives*. Kerres and De Witt (2003) elaborated that designing pedagogically grounded blended learning means attending to content, communication, and student construction of learning. Lanham and Zhou (2003) specifically applied blended learning within the context of cultural accessibility. They argued that the "benefit of blending is that it allows students from different cultures the ability to select the delivery format of their learning content, hence improving their interaction with the environment" (p. 287). As presented in the cases that follow, it is this flexibility that is the key determinant of culturally and globally accessible higher education.

## **CASE DESCRIPTIONS**

Putting aside geography and history momentarily, the two universities reflected in these cases have something unique to demonstrate in the field of higher education in that both have developed exemplar approaches to culturally and globally accessible teaching and learning. Both have common and disparate elements of higher education in Australia and Canada as Commonwealth nations which make them compelling for analysis. The case description is presented in three parts. The first part paints a picture of Australian and Ca-

nadian national and university culture in order to contextualize the relative cultural accessibility of the institutions. The second and third parts depict the case of a single university in each of these countries. The Bond University case focuses on the pedagogic problems frequently experienced by international students and the teaching and learning solutions that the university has put into place in order to address these challenges. The University of Calgary case is situated in the interface between learners and university programs and addresses the problems and solutions (where possible) of the Graduate Division of Educational Research within the Faculty of Education. Readers should note that blended learning is operationalized differently within the two cases. At Bond University, the blend of face-to-face and digital approaches is within every course, whereas within the University of Calgary case, the blend occurs within the program overall.

## **Australian and Canadian National and University Culture**

Bourne (2000) wrote about the contemporary irony that universities have a heightened role to play in worldwide socio-economic development within the age of the globalized knowledge economy, and yet universities are devalued commodities. He argued that the solutions to worldwide declining esteem and support for universities lie in alliances, networks and collective action between Commonwealth nations (developed and developing). As academics within two universities in two of the five wealthiest Commonwealth nations (after Singapore and United Kingdom and before New Zealand) we believe that collaborative efforts to communicate cultural accessibility of higher education teaching and learning such as conveyed through this chapter are worth prioritizing.

Miller (1995) compared and contrasted university culture in the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. For the purposes of this current analysis, only the results for Australia and Canada will be

described. Overall, Miller's inquiry revealed that between universities in these two nations, "the ideas that inform the dominant political discourses have much common ground" (p. 41). Miller highlighted a number of similarities between Australian and Canadian nations and university culture, many of which define them as distinct from many other university systems. Both nations have a colonial (as opposed to imperial) history. In both, there is a notable absence of 'ancient collegial' universities such as Oxford and Cambridge in the United Kingdom. In both nations, there is an increased percentage of society pursuing higher education with the effect of lowered aptitude entry scores. Both are suffering troubled economies. This can be seen in the decline of public funding to universities and the intensification of marketing and enrolment schemes. There is increasing pressure to adopt instrumentalist vocational pedagogical models. There is reduced research funding and intensive competition between universities for these funds. The majority of funded research explicitly addresses national economic priorities and has the potential to generate private industry contribution.

While both nations administrate universities through federal as opposed to unitary systems, herein are the primary contrasts. Miller described the Australian case as a 'hard' federal case. "The Commonwealth government in Canberra, through the exercise of financial, administrative and political power, has been able to take increasing control over universities and those who work in them" (p. 44). On the other hand, while higher education is ultimately federal in Canada, distribution of funds is handled provincially. Canada is a "federal state of ten provinces and two territories<sup>1</sup>, whose constitution recognizes higher education as a matter of provincial jurisdiction and control" (p. 44). Miller explained that the federal government distributes block funding to the provinces who may then distribute the overall money at provincial government members' discretion including, for example, acting upon a decision to allocate

a higher proportion to health care leaving less for higher education. Miller's analysis revealed Australian and Canadian university systems as more similar than different, and as developed Commonwealth nations, distinct from other higher education systems.

The paragraphs above presented a primer to Australian and Canadian university systems. Because this chapter is part of a collection about cultural accessibility, the next question then, is what about culture? How similar are Australia and Canada culturally? The premier authority on culture is Geert Hofstede. His (2001) second edition of *Culture's Consequences* presents the most-pervasive and well-respected cultural factors and model despite the fact that his data was primarily collected between 1967 and 1973, and that his theory has been critiqued as static, essentialist and over focused on nation as the sole determinant of culture (Chiang, 2005; Min-Sun, 2007). While it is important to acknowledge these criticisms, Hofstede's model is used here because his data is consistent with the authors' case observations. Hofstede described his primary research method as follows.

*The base data for the study discussed in this book were collected in a large multinational corporation: IBM. The company's international employee attitude survey program began between 1967 and 1973 in two survey rounds produced answers to more than 116,000 questionnaires from 72 countries in 20 languages. The analysis focused on country differences in answers on questions about employee values" (p. 41).*

For the purposes of this chapter, each of Hofstede's five dimensions is briefly described, and the scores for Australia and Canada compared and contrasted. As a metaphoric yardstick for American readers, scores from the USA are included in the analysis. For international readers, the high and low country on each measure is identified.

The implications of each cultural dimension on higher education are introduced.

The higher the score on the individualism / collectivism scale (out of a possible 100 points), the more motivated persons of that nation are by personal gain – hence higher individualism scores. They make their decisions based on what will benefit themselves personally over the good of the nation or society. Australia has the second high score in this category (90). USA, the high scorer, exceeded Australia's score by only one point. Canada falls somewhat lower in the national comparison, but is still highly individualistic at 80 points. The smallest score on this scale was by Guatemala, meaning that persons from this nation are more likely to put others over themselves. As an illustration of the complexity of higher education cultural accessibility, one can imagine the group-work dynamics when a Guatemalan student is assigned to work with students from the USA and Australia.

The second dimension is power distance. A high score in power distance means that there are large degrees of separation between ranks or castes in society. Persons from cultures who score high in this category honour and revere their superiors in social status and rank. Australia, Canada, and the United States all scored well below the midpoint of this scale at 36, 39, and 40 respectively. This means that by most counts they are egalitarian societies. It is not surprising that of the three, Australia scored lowest, as Australians have low tolerance for people who “big note” themselves, including and perhaps especially, university academics. The high culture on this measure is Malaysia and the low is Austria. The implications for higher education are that Malaysian students are likely to experience discomfort with expressing critical thinking if the line of argument runs counter to what their professor has lectured. The tendency of students from south-east Asia to listen rather than speak, and to seek and explicitly follow the professor's instructions is well documented by authors such as Gerbic (2005), Gu (2005), Skyrme (2005), and

Thorpe (2006). Notably, international students beyond Asia (e.g. France) struggle with similar cultural dissonance with respect to pedagogical stance (Patron, 2009).

The third dimension is masculine / feminine. In a masculine culture, *men are men and women are women*. In other words, there is high traditional gender role definition. Feminine cultures, on the other hand, are much more flexible and allow diversity within gender characteristics and roles. A high score on this measure indicates a more masculine culture. On this scale, Australia and United States are once again very similar. The scores were 61 and 62 respectively. Canada, on the other hand, is close to the midpoint at 52. The high (masculine) culture is Japan and the low (thereby feminine culture) is Sweden. In other words, Japanese students are likely to feel at home in Australian higher education with a dominant discourse that authors such as Currie, Harris and Thiele (2000) call *masculinist*, where authority positions are considered to be biased towards men (Asmar, 1999) and where the majority of students are enrolled in traditionally gendered disciplines (Miller, Lietz, & Kotte, 2002).

The next cultural category is uncertainty avoidance. The people of countries who score low on this dimension (the lowest score going to Singapore) have low tolerance of the unknown. They like to identify, anticipate and control as many factors as possible. The high-scorer was Greece. With Australia's vernacular of “no worries” juxtaposed with a need to anticipate weather-related natural disasters, they fall almost exactly between the two ends of the continuum with a score of 51. Canada and United States are very close by, at 48 and 46 respectively. There is a higher education saying that goes – *the greatest university learning is to tolerate ambiguity*. Singaporean students do not subscribe to this sentiment. They tend to experience heightened frustration with Australian and Canadian educators with constructivist pedagogies.

The final category is about perspective and outlook with long-term on one end of the continuum and short-term on the other. Countries, who score highest such as Hong Kong, orient themselves to the distant future. The people of Hong Kong are capable of delayed gratification. On the other end of the scale, people from Pakistan are oriented toward short-term gains and rewards. Fortunately for the students from Pakistan, Australia and Canada both have fairly low scores on this domain (31 and 23 respectively), indicating that people of both of these cultures tend to cast their gaze upon the short-term. Similarly, the score for the United States is 29. Applying this domain to higher education, students from Pakistan tend to want assessment items earlier in the term with quick-turn-around on the feedback, whereas students from Hong Kong are willing to study for a large-scale final exam.

It is important to remember that there is a great deal of variation *within*, just as there is *between* cultures (Guo & Jamal, 2007). Some of the other impacting factors are age, gender and birth order. While Hofstede's model should not be used to homogenize, stereotype or to erect ceilings on students, the cultural dimensions do raise the salience of learning factors such as the dynamics of the relationship between the teacher and learner, the learners' relative needs for clear expectations, and desire for feedback. The means by which an Australian and a Canadian university developed solutions to address culturally accessible learning follow.

## **Bond University**

Bond University opened in 1989 on the Gold Coast of Queensland, Australia. Bond was the only tertiary institution in Australia designed as an international university, as opposed to an Australian university with an enrolment of international students. As such, Bond has developed specialized programs and pedagogical initiatives to support a consistent enrolment of 40% international stu-

dents and 60% Australian national students. The 2008 total student population was 3758, 27% of whom were postgraduate. Bond is a private, not-for-profit university with four faculties: business, technology, and sustainable development; health sciences and medicine; humanities and social sciences, and; law. Bond operates through three full compulsory semesters meaning that students complete a condensed degree. Since establishment, Bond has produced over 12,000 graduates and currently graduates 1500 people per annum.

As a newcomer to Australian higher education (Marginson, 2006), Bond University established and has maintained itself as distinctive in teaching and learning. Across the university, Faculty and school administrators, and academics design learning experiences and assessment items that catalyse the four graduate outcomes of: knowledge and critical thinking; leadership, initiative, and teamwork; communication skills, and; responsibility.

Teaching and learning at Bond University is distinctive in three ways. First, the ratio between academics and students is maintained at the uniquely low figure of ten to one. Small course sizes mean that Bond academics are able to meet the desirable pedagogical conditions of multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression. These principles of universal design for learning as described by Jardine, Friesen and Clifford (2006); Kinash (2006); Moulton, Huyler, Hertz, and Levenson (2002); Rose and Meyer (2002); Rose and Meyer (2006), and; Rose, Meyer, and Hitchcock (2005) are a means of meeting the needs of diverse learners through facilitating learning experiences, motivating, and encouraging students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways, including a blend of traditional paper-based, digital and multi-media pedagogies.

Second, Bond University is broadly and deeply connected to the community. Industry committees extensively informed the initial higher education curriculum, and the professions and professional accreditation continue to shape content and teaching processes. The students participate

in work-integrated learning and all learning is conversely integrated through authentic work. Through research partnerships, internships, and a well-supported alumni network, Bond University maintains close ties to its corporate partners.

Third, Bond University has committed to blended learning through choosing a combination of face-to-face and e-learning across the university and for 100% of courses, unique in the field of higher education whereby the other Australian universities offer courses in each of the three modes of face-to-face, distance, and blended learning. In other words, at other universities some courses are offered as traditional lectures and tutorials without any interactive online components, other courses are offered entirely online through a learning moderation system and students never physically attend the campus, while still others are offered as a blend. The 100% blended nature of Bond University's pedagogy has proven effective.

Evidence of Bond University's quality is seen in a number of external awards. Most significant to this chapter, Bond is Australia's highest rating university, earning the most five-star ratings of any university across nine key performance indicators (including teaching quality, educational experience, and graduate outcomes) in the 2010 Good Universities Guide. The Law school's moot-ing team was the world champion of the 2009 International Criminal Court Trial Competition, defeating Yale and Utrecht University in the final of this prestigious competition. The Sustainable Development program is offered in the Mirvac School of Sustainability which won two of the 2009 Gold Coast Urban Design Awards and the 2009 Sustainability in the Built Environment Award. This building is Australia's first education pilot project to receive a six-green-star rating for design, thus demonstrating Bond University's commitment to authentic education of its students and leadership for global sustainability. Finally, Bond University is listed in the 2009 Industry, Company and Business Research's top 500 private companies. This bodes well for the Business

students, many of whom prove to be successful entrepreneurs upon graduation.

The next focus is on Bond University's initiatives to foster culturally accessible teaching and learning through blended learning. These solutions are organised under the four headings of the key pedagogic problems of international students as presented by De Vita (2007). Only some of Bond University's many solutions to cultural pedagogical accessibility are addressed here. Because Bond's mission is as an international university, there is a pervasive intercultural attitude and approach throughout the Faculties, schools, and student support programs. The strategies are too numerous to create an exhaustive list here. In addition, academics, administrators, support staff, and the students themselves are always refining and creating approaches in a dynamic process. As such, some of the approaches that are thought to be especially creative and therefore may be new ideas to other universities will be described here.

1. The pedagogic problem of communication and in particular language and Bond University's blended learning solutions.

All Bond University students participate in face-to-face learning in pedagogically designed spaces. Student presence on campus presents informal opportunities to interact with their student colleagues. Bond University developers keep up to date on the latest research on learning spaces (e.g. Long & Ehrmann, 2005; Wedge & Kearns, 2005) so that campus spaces are richly connected and invite presence and collaboration. A prime example is the Multi-media Learning Centre always comfortably crowded with learners. The student attendance in the months June through August 2009 exceeded the main library visits by 30%. The space is technology-rich with computers loaded with software and with LCD projectors and screens, wireless internet, and plenty of electrical outlets for plugging in laptops and charging mobile devices. There are a variety



of seating options including diner-booths, long counters with barstools, and a break-out room with kidney shaped couches.

It is not enough to leave student communication to chance. Even with conducive environments, fear of not being able to succeed with the language may still keep international students from communicating. The Bond University Career Centre enhances the opportunities for conversation by hosting regular chats designed for international students. Australian national students are also invited to attend, and frequently do. Students provide feedback that they look forward to these sessions, as it reduces the anxiety of approaching people cold and trying to create an opportunity to practice one's language skills through social conversation.

Because Bond University maintains a low instructor to student ratio, academics get to know their students well and are able to assess their particular needs and recommend solutions. It is suggested to students who experience heightened communication problems that they enrol in an elective called *Language and Drama*. This course was designed to address the communications needs of some of Bond University's international students, as drama is empirically demonstrated to yield more opportunities for conversational language than any other discipline (Gill, 1997). Students work in groups to plan short skits and perform them in front of one another. The instructor gives them assignments such as reading all of their lines very slowly, very quickly, or with deadpan or exaggerated expression so that the learners have extra practice with communications skills. The semester culminates with performance of a play in a theatre with an audience. The performance is filmed and students are given copies of the DVDs so that they have a record of their performance to take with them upon graduation.

Bond University offers instruction in four languages—Chinese, French, Japanese, and Spanish. Many of the international students choose to enrol in language courses, as studying a language

brings salience to conventions such as grammar and intonation, thereby helping with their English learning. In 2009, Bond University initiated the first year of what will become annual language competitions. Students at all levels competed in the language(s) that they were learning. The adjudicators came from local embassies. The competitions were filmed and the resulting DVDs used to give learners multi-media feedback on their own progress and for other students' peer modelling in language development. Personal reports indicated that experiencing the challenge of learning a language heightened the empathy of Australian national students for their international student colleagues.

2. The pedagogic problem with academic skills and Bond University's blended learning solutions.

Student Learning Services (SLS) at Bond University offers a diverse menu of supports for students to develop their academic skills. The availability of these services is clearly advertised on digital signage. In addition, many of the instructors work together with the Manager of SLS to build trigger elements into early-semester assignments. Examples of trigger items might include proper in and end text referencing and synthesizing information. Through these trigger items, students who are at risk of academically struggling come to the early attention of their instructors, who then refer them to SLS for support. Online, SLS has developed an extensive student intra-net site with primers, exemplars, mind-maps, and digital games to practice academic skills. Face-to-face, SLS staffpersons provide small-group workshops and one-on-one tutoring. They also provide workshops for academics in a train-the-trainer model.

3. The pedagogic problems of culturally dissonant conceptualisations of teaching and learning and Bond University's blended learning solutions.

As described above, culture is deep and enduring. We cannot expect students who have been taught to listen rather than speak, and rewarded for precise recall, to suddenly engage in Socratic dialogue with their instructor and frame their own arguments. Scaffolding is an educational metaphor that comes from the construction industry whereby supports are applied until a point of stability is reached. This approach of more intensive initial supports, removed over time when the student no longer needs them is effective in higher education (Rodríguez & Cano, 2006).

At Bond University, instructors from different schools and Faculties use the Podroom to scaffold learning through problem-based learning (PBL). The Podroom is a flexible, digitally enabled learning space. The work stations are designed for paired-learning. Each station has a single hard-drive and keyboard and two monitors. The central console is able to switch the images from station to station so that students can see the work being done at other stations without leaving their own. There are two LCD projectors and screens so that images from the central console and/or the stations can be centrally projected. In addition, there are kidney shaped couches and ottomans that are easily moved into comfortable group configurations.

The Podroom is ideal for problem-based learning (PBL). PBL begins with a problem, question or case. Instructors support students through progressive information and strategies to pose solutions (Venkatachary, Vasan, & Freebody, 2009). The flexible furnishings and spatial arrangements of the room allow the instructor to orient large group discussions. The pairing at the wireless work-stations allows students to support one another through searching, finding, analysing, and proposing. The instructors often pair international with Australian national students. The ability to project various images throughout the room and on the large screens allows peer-support and distribution of roles and stages of the process. The nature of PBL is grounded in scaffolded learning

and students learn strategies and problem-solving skills that transcend the course and discipline.

4. The pedagogic problem of encouraging students to adopt a constructivist approach and Bond University's blended learning solutions.

As described above, one of the graduate attributes that Bond University has made a commitment to fostering is knowledge and critical thinking. It is imperative that students are supported to move from their comfort zone of rote learning to constructing their own frameworks, theories, and arguments. Bond University supports students' generation of knowledge through Web 2.0 technologies. Flew (2008) presented and discussed a model of new media participation. The learners' new media actions listed in order from low to high engagement are, "read, favorite, tag, comment, subscribe, share, network, write, refactor, collaborate, moderate, lead" (p. 32). Web 2.0 technologies foster activity at the high end of the engagement scale. For example, through using WordPress, a blog publishing application, the instructor is not the sole member responsible for developing, posting and editing the learning resources. As adult learners, the students are also responsible for generating and sharing information, ideas, and critiques. Intercultural learning is fostered through activities such as asking students to generate examples and cases from their national contexts. Numerous communications tools are available through the application so that learners are conversing and pushing one another's thinking. The advantage of blended approaches is that there are face-to-face sessions in which to support learners who are new to Web 2.0 technologies.

### **University of Calgary, Faculty of Education**

The University of Calgary (U of C) is a comprehensive university, ranked in the top seven of

Canadian research universities, with 17 faculties and 30 research institutes, supporting more than 27,600 students in undergraduate, graduate and professional degree programs. U of C has a full complement of academic programs and encourages multi-disciplinary programs, meaning students can combine their interest areas and create an education that suits them. The university has a commitment to internationalization, recognizing it as an integral part of the economic, political and social realities of its campus and the wider community. There are over 2,100 international students from 100 countries at the U of C and approximately nine percent of undergraduate international students are exchange students, on-campus for only one or two semesters. Internationalization is a priority, and the university is committed to offering more students opportunities for study and travel abroad with over 125 active student exchange agreements as well as a number of field schools and group study opportunities. Currently more than 1000 undergraduates per year include study abroad as part of their degree program. For example, students in the final semester of their Bachelor of Education program can elect to participate in *Teaching Across Borders*, and complete their semester teaching in one of more than 10 countries around the world.

Owing to the size and complexity of the institution, it would be impossible to summarize the responsiveness of each faculty to the issue of internationalization and the inherent challenges identified earlier in this paper. For example, the Faculty of Nursing has opened a campus in Qatar, offering a bachelor's degree in Nursing, which is contextually based and driven by international standards (<http://www.qatar.ucalgary.ca/home/mission>). Specifically, whereas the case of Bond University focussed on the entire university, this case will focus on the innovative programming of the Graduate Division of Education Research (GDER) – a division within the Faculty of Education.

GDER added distance delivery, in addition to and parallel with, its campus-based graduate programs, thereby extending its reach and access to a range of learners in various locations across Canada and the world. Application to both delivery options is viewed with the same rigorous admission standards. The difference between the two rests with the fees charged (distance delivery is more expensive); courses offered (of the 10 specialisations within GDER, two do not offer their courses online); and degrees offered (the PhD is not offered via distance delivery). Typically, graduate students enrol in a mixture of delivery options, choosing some distance education courses and others with face-to-face components. Most campus-based courses offer online activities, using a learning management system (Blackboard) or other social software such as blogs or WIKIS.

Because the University of Calgary (U of C) has identified itself as a research and inquiry-based institution, much of the pedagogical framework describing Bond University in the previous section is core to U of C's instructional design. Of particular interest are five concerns specific to U of C and the approach that GDER has taken to address them.

1. The value of a PhD degree - When the Faculty of Education conceptualized a distance delivery doctoral program, its purposes were clear; (1) to increase access to doctoral education for working professionals who could not stop their careers and pursue a degree fulltime and (2) to meet the needs of rural and remote students who could not leave their communities and move to Calgary full-time. The Faculty of Graduate Studies at U of C granted GDER permission to offer online doctoral studies but only for the specific program of Doctor of Education (EdD). This has proven problematic as some countries give priority to PhD degrees, viewing EdDs as less scholarly and more applied. Therefore, international students wanting



a PhD must come to campus in Calgary, leaving work, families, friends and support networks while incurring substantial cost in terms of travel and relocation. At this point, there is absolutely nothing GDER can do to address this, as the decision was made by the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Ironically, Harvard University only offers EdD degrees so it seems the issue is really international perception of the value of the EdD.

2. Difference in fee structure – Completing a degree by distance delivery is almost double in cost. Further, few if any scholarship funds are available for distance delivery students. These issues have caused some distance students to feel that the distance program is a “cash grab” by the institution. Ironically, even recognizing these price differentials, many local Calgary residents opt to take their program by distance delivery for the perceived convenience and flexibility. GDER is addressing the issue of scholarships for distance students, but the fee structure will probably not change in the near future as GDER is required to follow a cost recovery scheme to finance programs beyond the traditional model of campus based teaching and learning.
3. Access to resources – University of Calgary has become a leader in access to digital resources to both support campus and distance students. The Faculty of Education is proud of the fact that it has provided library access to university colleagues in developing countries, offering them the same access to the U of C collection as campus faculty and students. Further, the U of C is building a digital library (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/oncampus/weekly/oct14-05/digital-library.html>) which will expand access to resources to a wider range of patrons - globally and locally.
4. ICT skills – Even as technology becomes more pervasive and affordable, the defi-

ciency and/or gap in skills and abilities of both students and faculty remains wide. GDER offers support and training sessions on everything from digital library access and database searching to basic ICT skills in the use of both asynchronous (Blackboard) and synchronous (Elluminate Live) software. While one might assume a gradual increase over the years in skills and awareness of both students and faculty, this has not proven to be true, and so students and faculty come to classes with various technological challenges and concerns. GDER has instituted an ICT support team; and the U of C has an IT department that handles technology and communication related issues, ranging for security to access, innovations to support for existing e-learning environments.

5. E-learning challenges – So much has been written about the promises, potential and problems of e-learning, that they need not be addressed in this case other than to say issues of time zones for synchronous learning (for example, in a current distance course students are from across Canada, Greece, and Japan and Korea); cultural context (for example in the course mentioned previously, students are from Canada, Saudi Arabia, USA, Pakistan, and East Africa); and previous learning (previous degrees for graduate students in GDER have been obtained from countries around the world) significantly impact course design. To address these challenges, GDER has tried to balance synchronous and asynchronous class meetings recognizing that all students are not in the same time zone; has attempted to reflect a respectful stance to potentially controversial topics; and conforms to an international standard which translates degrees from various countries using a well recognized metric (International Handbook of Universities and Guide to Chinese Universities and Colleges).

While not claiming to have *gotten it totally right*, the Faculty of Education at the University of Calgary attempts to balance the competing interests of the institution, the faculty, faculty members and students. Students are offered regular opportunities to evaluate their program, courses and instructors. While not perfect, these evaluations do positively impact faculty merit and promotion, program direction, and external reports concerning student satisfaction.

## **ANALYSIS OF SOLUTIONS**

The case universities' commitment to blended learning can best be understood through applying Postman's (2003) critique of the Internet in higher education. Pittinsky (2003), Chairman of Blackboard Inc. at the time of publication, invited six other people to write their responses to the question, "is the impact of e-learning on higher education transformative or simply evolutionary" (xiv). The responses of contributors such as the Columbia University Teacher's College President and a Wall Street Equity Analyst were very positive about the impact of the internet on higher education, leaving the reader with the question as to whether universities of the future would trade *clicks for bricks*, or in other words, whether all higher education would be conducted online rather than on physical campuses. Postman, New York University Professor and Social Critic, wrote what Pittinsky described as "the potential downside of technology's increasing impact on education" (xviii).

Postman (2003) posed six questions to consider about e-learning in higher education: what problem gets solved by this new technology; whose problem is it; what new problems are created after solving an old problem; who and what might be harmed by a technological solution; what changes are gained and lost with new technologies, and; who and what acquire power due to technological change.

The first question is – *what problem gets solved by this new technology*. Postman's (2003) goal in asking this question seemed to be to raise awareness that the technology *should* arise as a response to a problem rather than just because the developer or adopter is a techno-enthusiast. In the case of Bond University, the approach to blended learning was developed in response to authentic problems. The primary problem was that Bond University's commitment to maintaining a 60/40 ratio of national to international students meant that educators were trying to educate culturally diverse individuals together as one group. While Bond's problem was primarily one of cultural accessibility, the problem faced by the GDER program at the U of C was one of global accessibility. There was a growing need / want among overseas students for the type of education that the GDER program was offering.

The case universities considered three possible solutions. The three alternatives to culturally accessible teaching and learning are distance education, face-to-face learning, and blended learning. The pros of distance education are that it has the capacity to extend higher education teaching and learning to a geographically wider student population, although the reality is that any-time and any-place does not extend to any-one (Dhanarajan, 2001). Furthermore, if pedagogically-grounded, the flexibility of digital resources means that the needs of students at all ends of the continuum are addressed in multiple formats to accommodate learning styles (Rossiter, 2007). For example, while the primary goal of some students is to achieve the standard learning outcomes, others want or need enrichment or remedial skill development. The main con is that if they study while geographically situated in their home country, incoming international students may not receive the important cultural immersion and conversational English experience described as mandatory by researchers such as Briguglio, (2000), and Cruikshank, Newell and Cole (2003). The main pro of face-to-face learning

is that academics have greater control over the learning experiences of students, who are required to attend lectures, tutorials, and labs for learning content and process - notwithstanding the claim from authors such as Rossiter that relinquishing the control to the students is actually one of the ultimate goals and potential benefits of infusing Web 2.0 technologies. The main cons of face-to-face teaching and learning without infused digital technologies are that students are denied the benefit of cognitive stimulation and dialogic engagement which are empirically demonstrated outcomes of infused educational technologies, and the teaching takes a one-size-fits-all approach. Both case universities have thereby elected blended learning whereby students reap the benefits of both face-to-face teaching and learning and of infused educational technologies including the internet, communications and multi-media tools (Dengler, 2008; Liu & Cheng, 2008; Panda, 2005; Pedró, 2005; Siritongthaworn, Krairit, Dimmitt, & Paul, 2006). At Bond University, blended learning takes the form of combined face-to-face and digital pedagogies for all students across all courses. At U of C, the blend of face-to-face and digital is across the GDER program as a whole.

The next question posed by Postman (2003) is – *whose problem is it*. The point that Postman is making through asking this question is that organizations often blame the victim. As described in the *situation background* above, international students are often recruited (for tuition fees) and then blamed for the problems that are inherent in being an international student. By making an intentional decision to maintain a ratio of 40% international students, Bond University accepted the problem of culturally accessible teaching and learning as an institutional responsibility. Their creative and multiple efforts as described above to address these problems through a blended learning pedagogy are evidence of taking responsibility for the solutions and thereby promoting a quality higher education experience for all learners. Within GDER, faculty members recognize the pressure

on distance education students with respect to the differential fee structure and are actively working to be able to offer scholarships for these learners, provide increased digital resource options, and enhanced supervision / administrative support.

Postman (2003) asserted that problems and solutions in education are complex, and tend to have a dynamic and convoluted rather than a linear pattern. As such, he asked the question - *what new problems are created after solving an old problem*. The new problem at Bond University and at U of C is at the level of the academic. The e-learning components of blended learning are in place. Innovative learning spaces are built and well-equipped with hardware, software, and multimedia resources. Site licences have been purchased and staff persons' computers updated. However, the uptake of digital resources has not been universal, nor can one even say widespread, and many academics state that they perceive increased pressures experienced as expectations to learn and apply new technologies. These problems are not unique to the case universities. A sense of increasing pressure through ICT implementation is reported in the literature (Randaree & Narwani, 2009), as is not using educational technology to its full potential (Bell & Farrier, 2008; Norton & Hathaway, 2008; Reeves & Reeves, 2008).

While the response to Postman's (2003) previous question is in the domain of the educator, the answer to the next question is about the students. Postman asked - *who and what might be harmed by a technological solution*. While e-learning opens up opportunities and pedagogical inspiration for many learners, it also heightens the effect of the digital divide. The digital divide is particularly relevant when considering cultural accessibility, as many incoming students from developing nations do not have the exposure or experience to new technologies that come to play in the higher education environment (Babu, 2008; Enoch & Soker, 2006; Sims, Vidgen, & Powell, 2008). For example, a graduate student from Burundi came late in the semester to seek help with a distance

course which was administered through a learning moderation system. He was able to access the discussion forums and regularly participated. However, he was increasingly discomfited by a sense of disorientation. He admitted that he was ‘faking it’ and really did not know what his student peers were talking about on the forum. The discovery was made that not only had he never accessed the course documents and multimedia materials, but he did not even know that these resources existed. He explained that prior to arriving at the University he had never used a computer. While this situation is diminishing as technology becomes more affordable, institutions cannot make the assumption that the digital divide has been bridged by all students in their programs.

There are two further aspects to accessibility and equitability. As a private university, Bond’s higher fees leave little expendable income for some students to purchase needed technologies, and prevent some students from choosing Bond as their higher education provider. A similar problem exists for students enrolling in the distance education route through GDER. Further, if we are to embrace an authentic full-scale stance of accessibility for diverse learners, then we must also address the heightened digital divide experienced by students with disabling conditions, particularly with functional disabilities such as hearing or vision impairment (Konur, 2007; Steyaert, 2005).

Postman’s (2003) fifth question is - *what changes are gained and lost with new technologies*. Postman was particularly interested in language changes because the new terms provide clues as to shifting perceptions and dynamics. Language is particularly relevant in the Australian context of internationalization of higher education because Australians are known for an expressive, colourful vernacular. The featured language is particularly intriguing in Davies and Harcourt’s (2007) article, “No shonky, cappuccino courses here, mate. UK perspectives on Australian higher education.” The article was written by two academic professionals from the United Kingdom. To interpret

the article’s title, *shonky* means of poor quality and the North American equivalent term would be *hokey*. *Cappuccino courses* are ones with low academic rigour and scholarship. *Mate* is a noun regularly used in greeting and conversation. There are subtle distinctions between when Australians insert the word *mate* as a term of endearment and when they use it to put others in their place, as is the case in the title of this article. Comparing the dynamics of the contemporary university between the United Kingdom and Australia, the authors wrote, “we discovered on our walkabout that although Australia distinguishes itself with a preference for flat whites and long blacks, like the UK it is a dynamic player in the global higher education market” (p. 122). *Walkabout* is a rite of passage for Aboriginal youth, connoting a voyage of discovery for the authors. Flat whites and long blacks are espresso drinks (Americano) the first with milk and the second without. This is in stark contrast to the article’s title of cappuccino courses. The language of this article conveys a message about the motivations for higher education internationalization efforts in that the income and pedagogy need to stay entwined.

Postman’s (2003) final question is - *who and what acquire power due to technological change*. Postman’s conceptualization of power is consistent with Foucault’s (1972 – 1979) notion of embedded power through actions and relationships. If designed, maintained, and grown as culturally accessible, blended learning has the potential to create the conditions to empower students and graduates who become social capital in the knowledge economy. Furthermore, universities become instruments, contributors and developers of diplomacy, global relationships, and equitable knowledge resources.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The following is an abbreviated list of lessons from the cases.

## ***Blended Learning Internationalization from the Commonwealth***

1. Communications – Design learning spaces that are inviting, convenient, digitally useable and invite conversation and collaboration.
2. Communications – Invite international students to scheduled chats - opportunities for informal conversation.
3. Communications – Offer a *Language and Drama* elective to international students.
4. Communications – Offer language courses and host language competitions.
5. Academic Skills – Design early-semester trigger elements of assignments to alert instructors to students who might be at risk for academic problems.
6. Academic Skills – Develop online, small group workshops, and one-on-one student tutoring in academic skills.
7. Academic Skills – Host workshops for instructors showing them the academic skills strategies development for students.
8. Conceptualisation of Teaching and Learning – Design classrooms as flexible learning spaces with mobile furnishings and digital work stations.
9. Conceptualisation of Teaching and Learning – Scaffold students’ learning through problem-based learning (PBL).
10. Constructivism – Consider Web 2.0 and 3.0 technologies such as blog publishing applications to encourage students to generate knowledge, resources, and understanding and explore virtual options (e.g. Second Life) for simulations and problem based learning.
11. Naming Degrees – Consider the status of degree designations (e.g. EdD) internationally (beyond the culture of the host institution).
12. Fee Differentials – If distance students are to pay higher fees for equivalent degrees, then investigate scholarships for the affected students.
13. Global Information Access – Provide library access to university colleagues in developing countries.
14. ICT Skills – Continue to assess and evaluate the match between ICT demands and abilities and facilitate timely and appropriate training and support accordingly.
15. E-learning Challenges – Balance asynchronous and synchronous communication tools, and be aware of culturally sensitive issues in order to maintain an expectation and practice of respect among students and faculty as well as bandwidth and time zones (for synchronous learning).

## **FUTURE CHALLENGES**

Few would argue the future of higher education rests in embracing aspects of blended learning in current practice. “... it is clear ... blended learning is more than fashionable; it is training and educational delivery method of choice (Bonk & Graham, in press). While numerous issues, trends, and concerns have been identified, we will focus on seven ideas consistent across our cases and the literature.

1. *Blended learning* options must be considered as a programmatic element. While this impacts bandwidth, access to current technology, and time zone issues, it appears blended learning is critical to student satisfaction and success.
2. Changed *pedagogy* is essential. Emerging technologies require changed pedagogies. Simply mapping existing face-to-face courses and instructional methods to distance delivery is poor practice.
3. *Emerging technologies* offer enhanced options for teaching and learning but also increase costs and user comfort. Every tool comes with a learning curve, suggesting faculty and students must commit to continuous learning and technology upgrading. Included in this is the emergence of handheld devices and the need to recognize that *mLearning*



- (mobile learning) will require its own pedagogical stance and instructional design.
4. Inclusion of *multimedia* to support multimodal learning is not only possible but essential to support core learning within blended courses. This will require universities to consider how they will support the development, delivery and storage of rich media.
  5. Opportunities for *eCollaboration* will be expected. Facebook has well over 300 million subscribers worldwide. Social software and Web 2.0 and 3.0 are standard practice for learners with access to the Internet (Shih, 2009).
  6. Faculty and students must *rethink their roles*. Faculty cannot embrace emerging technologies if learners refuse to acquire the necessary skills, abilities, and access to technology necessary to fully participate in distance delivery. While this will pass considerable cost on to universities, faculty members, and students, innovative practices, access to multimedia, exploration of virtual worlds such as *Second Life* and *Google Earth* will not be possible.

Learning is about preparing oneself for a changing world. If universities do not lead the way to innovation and technology enhanced teaching and learning, they risk finding themselves obsolete or irrelevant in an increasingly connected, global community. Internationalization allows students to make thoughtful choices about where they would like to receive their education. Blended learning, as suggested in this paper, encourages students to consider global educational experiences but reminds institutions there is more to internationalisation that attracting fee paying, non-resident students.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Culture** is the overall mindset shaped in a time and place and shared by a group of individuals. When individuals such as international students

leave their group they carry the mindset with them from their culture of origin to their culture of study.

**Cultural accessibility** means that higher educators actively design their teaching to ensure that all of their students are learning: through interaction with the instructor, their student peers and with globally responsible and responsive content.

**Internationalization** (as defined within the parameters of this chapter) is quality education for students who do not have citizenship in the country in which they are studying.

**Blended learning** in higher education means that: a combination of face-to-face and digital

teaching and learning approaches are offered to the students; the tools and approaches are deliberately chosen for their capacities and affordances, and; the design requires original creation versus tacking digital elements onto an existing face-to-face scenario or vice versa.

## ENDNOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Currently, Canada has three territories, as Nunavut was created in 1999.